



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Oct. 18, 2007

For immediate release

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSION TO MEET NOV. 7 IN CEDAR RAPIDS AREA

MEDIA CONTACT: Karen Grimes at (515) 281-5135

DES MOINES – Because of elections on Tuesday, the Environmental Protection Commission will meet Nov. 7 in Cedar Rapids.

Commissioners plan to attend tours and presentations on Tuesday starting at 3 p.m. at the Baymont Hotel, 1222 Park Place NE in Cedar Rapids.

The tour will start with storm water demonstration sites, followed by a presentation on solar arrays. Commissioners will then visit the former site of the Sinclair/Wilson Foods Packing Plant which has been redeveloped using the DNR's Brownfields funds.

The evening will end with dinner at 6:30 p.m. at Biaggi's, 320 Collins Road NE.

The regular meeting of the EPC will start at 9 a.m. Nov. 7. It will be held at the Wickiup Hill Outdoor Learning Center, 10260 Morris Hills Road in Toddville, north of Cedar Rapids. Public participation is scheduled for 10:30 a.m.

More information about the agenda items can be found on the DNR Web site under Commissions and Boards at www.iowadnr.gov.

Writer: Karen Grimes

PUBLIC'S HELP NEEDED TO IMPROVE RACCOON RIVER; PUBLIC MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

MEDIA CONTACT: Chris Van Gorp at (515) 281-4791 or Chris.VanGorp@dnr.iowa.gov

DES MOINES — From Jefferson to Guthrie Center, from Sac City to Des Moines – the DNR is seeking your suggestions, comments and questions on improving water quality in the Raccoon River.

While the river may not run directly through your town or farm, you may still live in the river's watershed. A watershed, also called a river basin, is an area of land that drains into a river or stream. Making improvements in smaller streams and changing how land is managed in the watershed can make a difference in the river.

The DNR has developed a water quality improvement plan for the Raccoon River. The DNR will hold four public meetings in the watershed to explain the DNR's findings and what needs to be done to improve the river. The DNR will also answer questions and accept comments on the plan. The meetings will be held:

Guthrie Center:

Nov. 8, 1:30 p.m., Springbrook Education Center (north of Guthrie Center on F-25)

Jefferson:

Nov. 7, 7:00 p.m., Greene County Community Center, 204 W. Harrison

Sac City:

Nov. 7, 1:30 p.m., Sac City Community Recreation Center, 1015 W. Main St.

West Des Moines

Nov. 8, 6:30 p.m., Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge, 2500 Grand Ave.

Portions of the Raccoon River are impaired by high levels of bacteria and nitrates. High levels of bacteria can cause people recreating in the rivers to become sick. Elevated nitrate levels cause problems with using the rivers as a drinking water source, including thousands of people in the Des Moines metro area. The DNR's improvement plan found that 90 percent of water quality problems in the Raccoon River come from nonpoint sources. Nonpoint source pollution, especially sediment, nutrients and bacteria, washes into the Raccoon River from wide areas like farm fields, forested lands and urban areas.

However, the situation cannot be fixed without the help of people upstream who can address the water quality in their local streams. Citizen involvement is critical to achieve water quality goals in these watersheds and across the state.

With the help of Iowans, the DNR is developing water quality improvement plans, also known as a Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), to address waters across the state considered "impaired." The DNR calculates how much of a pollutant a water body can receive and still maintain its designated use such as maintaining aquatic life, allowing body contact such as swimming or being used as a drinking water supply.

The plan also suggests ways Iowans can improve the Raccoon River. The DNR works with local groups to form watershed projects that put the water quality improvement plan into action.

Those not able to attend the meetings can view the plan at <http://watershed.iowadnr.gov/tmdl/publicnotice.html> and can send their comments by Nov. 26 to the DNR through the following contact:

Chris Van Gorp
Iowa DNR
Wallace State Office Building
502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, 50319
(515) 281-4791
Chris.VanGorp@dnr.iowa.gov

For more information on water quality improvement plans and watershed projects, visit the DNR's watershed improvement Web site at <http://watershed.iowadnr.gov>.

Writer: Jessie Brown

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FEEDLOT BYPASSES IN FREMONT COUNTY

MEDIA CONTACT: Dan Stipe, Atlantic Field Office, at (712) 243-1934

TABOR – The Gregory Feedlot near Tabor in Fremont County discharged wastewater from its beef open feedlot Monday evening after heavy rainfall in the area.

About six inches of rainfall caused the West Nishnabotna River to flood, nearly filled road ditches and caused a highway to close.

The feedlot has a wastewater permit that allows discharges if rainfall exceeds the 25-year, 24-hour storm event or about 5.25 inches of rainfall.

The owner, Jim Gregory of Tabor noticed the basins were full and beginning to overflow Sunday afternoon. As intended, the overflow went into a long grassed area designed to filter and treat manure runoff. By Monday evening the grassed area began to fill, so Gregory diverted runoff to a nearby cornfield from 6 p.m. Monday to noon on Tuesday.

Some manure probably reached the West Nishnabotna River on Wednesday, but would have been highly diluted.

The DNR will continue to monitor the situation. Gregory took samples of the runoff and will have them analyzed for potential pollutants.

Writer: Karen Grimes

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HEAVY RAINFALL OVERWHELMS WASTEWATER SYSTEMS IN EASTERN IOWA

MEDIA CONTACT: Mike Wade (Dubuque, Monticello) or Doug Hawker (Cedar Rapids) at (563) 927-2640.

DES MOINES – More heavy rainfall Wednesday has led three eastern Iowa communities to report wastewater bypasses to the DNR Thursday.

Heavy rain can overload wastewater collection systems, which are underground sewer pipes that carry sewage to a treatment plant. Aging or poorly maintained sanitary sewer systems are particularly vulnerable to influxes of storm water. With sewage pipes overwhelmed, excess water has nowhere to go, and can backup into basements through floor drains. Bypassing can lower the water level in the collection system, keeping sewage from backing up into basements, which would present health risks.

Facilities are required to report bypasses caused by mechanical failures to the DNR within 12 hours of onset or discovery. Facilities do not have to immediately report bypasses from precipitation events, but must include them in their monthly operating report to the DNR.

Precipitation-related environmental incidents that have been reported to the DNR as of 11:30 a.m. Thursday include:

Dubuque County

Dubuque: The City of Dubuque discharged about 500 gallons of untreated wastewater from a manhole for 10 minutes, beginning at 5:30 a.m. Thursday. The wastewater from the manhole on Key Way reached unnamed tributaries to the Mississippi River.

Jones County

Monticello: The City of Monticello began bypassing at 7:00 a.m. Thursday to an unnamed tributary of the Maquoketa River. The city is pumping untreated wastewater from a manhole on Washington St.

Linn County

Cedar Rapids: The City of Cedar Rapids began discharging untreated wastewater from a pumping station at 1500 E Avenue at 9:00 p.m. Wednesday. The city estimates about 20,000 gallons of wastewater has reached the Cedar River.

Writer: Jessie Brown

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ADM CLINTON DISCHARGES WASTEWATER TO MISSISSIPPI

MEDIA CONTACT: Kathy Lee, DNR, (515) 725-0384.

CLINTON — Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM) in Clinton discharged 2,000 gallons of untreated wastewater to the Mississippi River Tuesday.

ADM staff was replacing a valve on the bottom of a collection tank and drained remaining liquid through the valve. While 4,000 gallons of wastewater were released, staff recovered 2,000 gallons. The other 2,000 gallons reached the Mississippi River.

The discharge began at noon Tuesday and ended just after 2:30 p.m. and was reported to the DNR shortly after. Bypasses from mechanical failures must be reported within 12 hours.

Writer: Jessie Brown